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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 001610

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2012

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR TOUR D'HORIZON WITH EU AFFAIRS MINISTER  
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CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR MEL SEMBLER FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: DURING A MARCH 26 COURTESY CALL ON EU AFFAIRS MINISTER ROCCO BUTTIGLIONE, THE AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED THE EU CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION AND THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES SURROUNDING EU ENLARGEMENT. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO ASKED ABOUT THE MINISTER'S RECENT UNHELPFUL COMMENTS ON IRAQ, AND POINTED OUT THAT THEY WERE OUT OF SYNC WITH THE POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI. HE OFFERED TO GIVE THE MINISTER A MORE DETAILED BRIEFING ON THE REASONS FOR THE U.S. AND ITALIAN GOVERNMENT CONCERNS ABOUT IRAQ. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) THE AMBASSADOR CALLED ON EUROPEAN UNION AFFAIRS MINISTER ROCCO BUTTIGLIONE ON MARCH 26. THE MINISTER WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR. THE AMBASSADOR WAS ACCOMPANIED BY POLMC, A/ECMIN AND ECONCOUNS.

13. (C) THE AMBASSADOR BEGAN THE MEETING BY NOTING THAT THE U.S.-EU RELATIONSHIP WAS A CRUCIAL ONE, OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE TO THE U.S. THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ITALY AND THE U.S. IS VERY STRONG, HE EMPHASIZED. THERE WILL, OF COURSE, ALWAYS BE TRADE ISSUES AND OTHER IRRITANTS. HOWEVER, THE OVERRIDING STRENGTH OF THE RELATIONSHIP IS THE CRUCIAL ELEMENT. THE MINISTER AGREED, NOTING THAT THE STRONG BILATERAL ALLIANCE ON ANTI-TERRORISM AND THE PROTECTION OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY ARE KEY. EVEN ON TRADE ISSUES SUCH AS STEEL, ITALY HAS KEPT IN MIND THE CRUCIAL NATURE OF THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, AND REACTED LESS DRAMATICALLY ON THE SPECIFIC TRADE ISSUE, SEEKING DIALOGUE INSTEAD OF CONFRONTATION.

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ITALY WITHIN THE EU  
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14. (C) THE MINISTER SUGGESTED THAT THE EU SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS ONE PART OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC COMMUNITY. THE ITALIAN AND UK GOVERNMENTS AGREED ON THIS BASIC TENET, HE STRESSED, WHILE OTHERS IN THE EU SEEMED LESS AWARE OF ITS TRUTH. "WE ARE MOVING FROM THE RHINE-CENTERED EU," HE SAID. ONCE FRANCE AND GERMANY DOMINATED THE EU, AND ONCE THEY DECIDED AN ISSUE, THE EU POSITION WAS DECIDED. NOW, INSTEAD, THERE IS A DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP MODEL. "ALTHOUGH THE UK HAS A GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT, WHILE WE ARE CENTER-RIGHT, WE ARE UNITED BY OUR PERCEPTION OF THE CHANGING WORLD. WE BOTH UNDERSTAND THAT THE OLD MODEL NO LONGER WORKS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD." POINTING TO THE WAY WORLD WARS I AND II HAD SEEN TANKS AND AIRCRAFT DESTROY THE USEFULNESS OF TRENCHES AS DEFENSES, BUTTIGLIONE REFERRED TO GLOBALIZATION AND LIBERAL MARKET ECONOMIES, IN WHICH TARIFFS AND NON-TARIFF BARRIERS COULD NO LONGER BE USED TO DEFEND DOMESTIC INDUSTRIES. INSTEAD, "WE CAN ONLY DEFEND OUR WORKERS BY GIVING THEM SKILLS AND EDUCATION AND HELPING THEM TO RETRAIN WHEN THEY LOSE THEIR JOBS."

15. (C) ITALY AND GERMANY ARE THE TWO COUNTRIES MOST IN FAVOR OF POLITICAL UNITY IN THE EU. THIS POSITION, HE EXPLAINED, WAS NOT DEPENDENT ON THE PARTY IN POWER BUT ON THE HISTORY OF THE TWO NATIONS. "THE MYTH OF THE NATION STATE COLLAPSED FOR US IN WORLD WAR II," SAID BUTTIGLIONE. WHILE THE BRITISH HAD SEEN THEIR RULING CLASS FACE THE SITUATION WITH COURAGE AND DECISIVENESS, ITALY AND GERMANY SAW THEIR RULING CLASSES

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COLLAPSE. WHILE THE BRITISH NATION STATE FADED GRADUALLY OVER DECADES, THAT OF ITALY AND GERMANY IMPLoded OVERNIGHT. ITALY AND GERMANY SAW THE EU AS A NECESSITY, WHILE THE BRITISH DID NOT. HOWEVER, BUTTIGLIONE ARGUED, "THE EU IS A NECESSITY FOR THE UK TOO." THE EU IS A CREATION OF ITS MEMBER STATES' NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTIES, WITHIN THE TRANSATLANTIC FRAMEWORK.

EU CONVENTION  
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16. (C) AS FOR THE EU, THE MINISTER STATED, "WE MUST DO TOGETHER ONLY THOSE THINGS THAT WE CAN DO WELL TOGETHER." HE INSISTED ON THE NEED FOR SERIOUS REFORMS. THE EU HAS TOO MUCH BUREAUCRACY, AND AT THE SAME TIME DOES NOT HAVE

SUFFICIENT DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OR TRANSPARENCY. THESE PROBLEMS NEED TO BE RESOLVED IN THE EU CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.

17. (C) "I'M A GREAT ADMIRER OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION," CONFIDED BUTTIGLIONE. HE CHARACTERIZED IT AS FLEXIBLE, RESPONSIVE TO THE REAL NEEDS OF CITIZENS, UNENCUMBERED BY PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS. MOST IMPORTANTLY, HE ARGUED, IT HAS SERVED THE U.S. FROM ITS EARLIEST DAYS THROUGH THE GROWTH OF A POWERFUL FEDERAL STATE. THE EU, HE INSISTED, NEEDS A FLEXIBLE, RESPONSIVE AND PRACTICAL CONSTITUTION TO TAKE IT

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INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00
	COME-00	CTME-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	DOFE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00
	EB-00	EXIM-01	OIGO-00	E-00	FAAE-00	VC-00	FRB-00
	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	ITC-01	LAB-01	L-00
	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01
	PA-00	PC-01	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	EPAE-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00
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P 291255Z MAR 02  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3024  
INFO ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY

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FROM THE PRESENT DAY, THROUGH A EUROPE OF NATIONS TO THE FEDERAL EUROPE THAT HE BELIEVED WOULD INEVITABLY BE CREATED IN THE FUTURE.

THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP

18. (C) THE ATLANTIC COMMITMENT, SUGGESTED THE MINISTER, MUST ALLOW US TO PARTICIPATE TOGETHER IN MAINTAINING FREEDOM AND PEACE AND A SAFE PLACE FOR DEMOCRACIES TO EXIST. BEFORE SEPTEMBER 11, HE ARGUED, THIS WAS NOT SO CLEAR. BUT SINCE SEPTEMBER 11, EUROPEANS HAVE EXPRESSED IN FAR GREATER NUMBERS THE NEED FOR BOTH AN EU AND AN ATLANTIC COMMITMENT. THE EVENTS OF THAT DAY REMINDED EUROPEANS THAT THEY AND THE U.S. SHARE A COMMON CIVILIZATION -- A COMMON CULTURAL, JUDEO-CHRISTIAN HERITAGE. "EVERY ITALIAN HAD EITHER BEEN TO THE WORLD TRADE CENTER OR KNEW SOMEONE WHO HAD. WE SAW THE VICTIMS AS PEOPLE, NOT SYMBOLS, AND WE PARTICIPATED IN THE GRIEF."

EU ENLARGEMENT

19. (C) THE AMBASSADOR ASKED ABOUT CANDIDATE COUNTRIES FOR ENLARGEMENT. WHICH WERE CERTAIN? WHICH WERE STILL IN PLAY? BUTTIGLIONE RESPONDED THAT ALL BUT CYPRUS AND TURKEY WERE CERTAIN. TURKEY WOULD NOT MAKE IT. PROSPECTS FOR CYPRUS WERE IMPROVING, BUT IT WAS NOT YET CERTAIN TO ENTER. ASIDE FROM THE GREECE-TURKEY ISSUES, CYPRUS HAD TO DO MORE AGAINST ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION.

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110. (C) AS THE CONVERSATION TURNED TO RUSSIA, THE MINISTER STATED THAT RUSSIA WOULD NOT BECOME A MEMBER OF THE EU IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. HE COULD CERTAINLY SEE POSSIBILITIES OF ASSOCIATION AND PARTNERSHIP FOR RUSSIA AND THE CIS, STRENGTHEN. HOWEVER, THE BOTTOM LINE WAS THAT THE EU COULD NEVER AFFORD TO GIVE RUSSIA ACCESS TO THE GENEROUS COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND STRUCTURAL FUNDS. RUSSIA WOULD BANKRUPT THE EU.

IRAQ

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11. (C) MINISTER BUTTIGLIONE HAD MADE SOME UNHELPFUL STATEMENTS REGARDING IRAQ, CLAIMING THAT U.S. MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ WOULD BE INHUMANE AND SHOULD NOT TAKE PLACE. THE AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THE CONTEXT OF HIGH LEVEL DISCUSSIONS ON IRAQ AMONG WORLD LEADERS, AND THAT PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI WAS IN ACCORD WITH THE U.S. PRESIDENT. EMBASSY POLMC SUGGESTED THAT THE MINISTER MIGHT FIND IT HELPFUL TO BE BRIEFED ON IRAQ AND ITS PROGRAM TO BUILD WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, AS WELL AS THE EFFORTS THE U.S. HAS MADE TO RESOLVE THIS. THE MINISTER EXPRESSED INTEREST.

12. (C) BUTTIGLIONE WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT HIS COMMENTS IN NO WAY INDICATED SUPPORT FOR IRAQ. HE NOTED THAT ITALY WAS NEAR ENOUGH TO IRAQ TO BE THREATENED WITH "NON-CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS." HOWEVER, HE SAW THE ISSUE IN TERMS OF THE PALESTINIAN SITUATION. "IN ORDER TO CREATE A MILITARY BUILD-UP AGAINST IRAQ, WE NEED TO CREATE A COALITION OF ARAB STATES AS PART OF IT. THERE IS NO WAY THEY WILL JOIN US  
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UNLESS WE HAVE SOLVED THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. ONCE WE DO SOLVE THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, SADDAM WILL SEE THAT HE HAS NO SUPPORT, AND GIVE IN." HE ADDED THAT ONCE THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE WAS RESOLVED, ITALY PROPOSED A "MARSHALL PLAN" FOR THE MID-EAST THAT WOULD STABILIZE THE REGION. ALL THIS WOULD LEAD TO EITHER AN OPENING FROM SADDAM OR A BREAKDOWN OF HIS REGIME. NO OUTSIDE FORCE WOULD BE REQUIRED.

13. (C) THE AMBASSADOR REJECTED THIS LINE OF REASONING. HE EMPHASIZED THAT SADDAM HAS NO MORE INTEREST IN PALESTINE THAN DOES OSAMA, AND REMINDED THE MINISTER THAT IRAQ HAS A PROGRAM OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, AND THAT INSPECTORS ARE NOT ALLOWED INTO THE COUNTRY. HE RENEWED THE OFFER OF A BRIEFING ON THE SITUATION, AND THE MINISTER ACCEPTED.

14. (C) COMMENT: BUTTIGLIONE, PHILOSOPHER BY TRAINING, IS A THOUGHTFUL COMMENTATOR WITH A DEEPLY HUMANISTIC -- AND ROMAN CATHOLIC -- WORLD VIEW. HIS ITALY IS GROUNDED IN EUROPEAN GEOGRAPHY, BUT ALSO IN EUROPEAN CULTURE, RELIGION AND HISTORY. A LONGSTANDING CRITIC OF MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ, HE APPARENTLY BELIEVES THAT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MEASURES CAN EFFECT CHANGES IN POLITICAL BEHAVIOR, EVEN IN DIFFICULT CASES SUCH AS IRAN AND IRAQ. HIS PREFERENCE FOR DIALOGUE AND COMPROMISE OVER CONFRONTATION MAY PUT HIM OCCASIONALLY AT ODDS WITH OUR MORE DIRECT STYLE, ALTHOUGH HE CAN STILL BE COUNTED FIRMLY AMONG THE FRIENDS OF THE U.S.

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00
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	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00	FAAE-00	VC-00	FRB-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	ITC-01	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00
	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00
	PC-01	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00
	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02
	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/011W			

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P 291255Z MAR 02  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3025  
INFO ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY  
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